



*January 19, 2025*  
*“Equal Heirs”*

*Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.*

*News:*

**Happy Birthday! Annual Church Meeting and snacks after the service.**

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**GALATIANS 3:26&27** ~ 26For you are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Verse 27 supports verse 26, not the other way around.

Becoming a “Son of God” has nothing to do with Baptism, but being a “Son of God,” does.

Son OF God status comes as God spiritually transfers you into His Family because you believe. The proof of that standing is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Then, because of what God has done we complete the transaction by embracing what the gift of Grace creates.

God’s Gift is ultimately a Gift of God Himself.

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

To be fully alive in Christ now means to be a full and active participant in Christ physically as well as spiritually. That's what Baptism is, from our side of the equation.

We commit to a Christian life by being baptized INTO Christ. We allow ourselves to be clothed WITH Christ, and so, we as individuals become one together with all other Christians IN Christ, because we all belong TO Christ. To the Body of Christ spiritually, but also physically as the church.  
(Romans 12:5, I Corinthians 12:20, Ephesians 4:25).

Being Baptized means that you accept your role as an integral and dynamic member of that Body, as exercised within the local church.

When a Christian commits to membership and the church acknowledges the Truth of that commitment a spiritual reality is enacted physically.

Clearly, such a Baptism confirms Salvation, but is in no way Salvific itself.

What about children born into the church though? The early church's solution was an additional type of Baptism. A kind of dependent Baptism. (The Shepherd of Hermas, Irenaeus, Cyprian, Hippolytus, Chrysostom, and Augustine, as a start).

- 1) Circumcision was practiced on babies born into the family.
- 2) Jesus rebuked His disciples for hindering the small children
- 3) The Bible records "whole households" being Baptized.

Over time, infant Baptism changed into the non-Biblical practice we see so often today. It all started when they began believing that Baptism was required for Salvation.

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

It was in keeping with that ancient tradition that I Baptized Brady.

The reason that I intentionally chose to Baptize Brady was to clearly demonstrate that Baptism is not Salvific and that if a Baby Dedication must be done with oil to be effective, it is legalism, if not witchcraft, pure and simple.

Here's what's truly wrong. Millions of people are Baptized into the church and then rarely darken the door afterwards.

**GALATIANS 3:28&29** ~ 28There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

As a person who is part of the one IN Christ, no one has a greater status and position than you do.

Paul was alluding to the Jewish morning prayer of Birkhot HaShachar. He used that to establish that all Christians are completely equal sharers in God's Grace.

Everyone who belongs to Christ through faith is already a descendant of Abraham and therefore an heir of God's eternal promise. Therefore, there can be no distinction between such believers.

This has everything to do with our standing as God's children and nothing to do with other distinctions.

If all gender distinctions are erased and there is truly no difference between men and women, then...  
(I Corinthians 7:24).

A proper Christian attitude is vital to life in Christ, both spiritually and physically in the church. It starts with...

- 1) The recognition that God is God.
- 2) The recognition that you have been given an eternity that you didn't deserve.

3) The ability to understand, accept, embrace, and operate in the Love of God.

(Philippians 2:2–6, 3:8&9, 13-15).

Stop worrying about everything and focus on Christ.

If you look for what is wrong, you will find it. Negativity is easy, it's exponentially self-producing, it is destructive, and it is of Satanic origins. Anyone can be a critic.

Closely related to attitude is one's mindset. The person who has their mind set on the things of this world cannot please God (Romans 8:5&6).

You choose your attitude and mindset...

Perhaps, if we took ourselves a little less seriously, and God a bit more seriously, we'd actually strive to be like Christ.

Communion for them was a fellowship meal taken together in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Ritualized Communion came about to save time, effort, and money.

Communion was always a central feature in all Christian gatherings until the radical reformation of about 450 years ago.

The point and purpose of a church service is to remember Christ. Nothing does that better than remembering Him through Communion.

The Pastor serves the Elders and the Elders serve you. We do that to demonstrate that, in our role as leaders, we serve you.

Happy 21<sup>st</sup> B-day/Anniversary Alêtheia Christian Fellowship.

I'll reread verse 26 from last week to get us rolling with the final bit of chapter 3...

Galatians 3:26–29, 26For you are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

We concluded last week with verse 26 and talked about how many translations, like the updated NASB that I just read from, make Paul's "Sons of God," description gender neutral. We discussed how, while it is correct in general, the erasure of masculinity in this case, misses Paul's point entirely.

Make no mistake about it, every person, whether male or female, who fully trusts in Jesus as their only Lord and Savior is a "Son of God" and therefore a full heir of the Promise that God made to Abraham.

Verse 27 starts with a conjunction usually translated as “For,” or “So.” It means that the verse functions as a support for verse 26, which is why I read it again. The “you are” of verse 26 is the “you who” of verse 27.

It is important because verse 27 supports verse 26, meaning that the baptism INTO and the clothing WITH of verse 27 supports the faith granting Sonship in verse 26, not the other way around. What I’m trying to point out is that becoming a “Son of God” has nothing to do with Baptism, but being a “Son of God,” living life as a “Son of God” does.

This is just one of dozens of places in the Bible where it is made perfectly clear that Baptism is not Salvific. Baptism comes as a result of Salvation, not as a part of it. Additionally, Baptism is not the sign, or seal, or proof, of the New Covenant. If it were, Paul would have certainly made that his argument against circumcision. So, what then is Baptism?

Today, we are going to have our Annual Church Meeting – everyone is welcome to attend. In preparation for today’s meeting, we sent out a survey

asking for input. We received a couple of dozen completed surveys.

In the responses, there were a few people questioning the teaching/preaching, the governance, the music, and or the format of the service, here at Alêtheia. Some of those things, like the music, I'll address in the meeting, but some of them lend themselves well to today's sermon.

Remarkably, 4 of them fit perfectly in the passage today. They are Baptism, Children, Attitude, and Communion. Here we are at Baptism. What exactly is Christian Baptism?

Verse 27 tells us that it comes as a result of being transferred into God's family as Sons OF God and that it is a Baptism into Christ that can be equated to clothing yourself with Christ. Skipping to verse 28 we find that all such people are considered to be one in Christ Jesus. Finally, in verse 29, we see that they are also those who belong TO Christ. Those little prepositions matter.

What does all of that mean? Obviously, to be a Son of God means that by believing in Christ enough to trust

Him fully for our standing, our Justification, our Salvation, God has made us His very own children. We know from earlier that the actual sign, or seal, or proof, of that fact is the deposit of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Now because of what God has done for us as Believers in Him we complete the transaction by embracing what the gift of Grace creates.

If a small child gives you a nicely wrapped gift that they are really excited about you enjoying. They have, simply by their offer, put you in a position to choose whether to accept it, or not. Ignoring the offer is a refusal to accept. There are only two genuine possibilities. Accept, and by extension, accept the kid as the gift-giver that they want to be, or reject, and by extension, reject the kid as the gift-giver that they want to be.

If you choose to accept, you could then just jam the gift into a shoebox in your closet without even unwrapping it. If you do that, has the gift had its intended effect?

You could unwrap it, see that it is a multi-colored macaroni necklace and pretend to admire the gift, thank the child profusely for it, and even show it off to



all your friends... but then stuff it in a drawer and never wear it. If so, has the gift had its intended effect?

In order to truly accept the gift for what it is and for what it is intended to produce, you must openly wear it – you must own it – you must embrace it proudly and incorporate it into who you are. In this example, you become a person who publicly wears a multi-colored macaroni necklace, because you fully accept the gift-giving child and so, the gift that they gave to you, for exactly what it is.

God does not Save people simply to check a box. He doesn't have the attitude, "There, I gave the people Salvation, and I don't care what they do with it." He gave Salvation for a purpose. It is a Gift with a purpose and the purpose isn't so people can live a more successfully selfish life either here and now, or in eternity.

In other words, God's not in the business of blessing people so they can spend the blessing on their own desires and operate autonomously with little to no interaction with God or with His other children.

See what I'm driving at? God's Gift is ultimately a Gift of God Himself. None of this is to enable people to do their own thing with less guilt or with more divine help. Jesus is not a "get out of hell free" card you play at the end to avoid the Lake of Fire and get your own McMansion in the sky.

The entire point and purpose of God's creative exertion was to share Himself with others that would never have existed. All of His incredibly self-sacrificing redemptive efforts were to facilitate a familial love relationship with people who want that.

It's so incredibly simple. God created you and me and everyone else for the purpose of fellowship in His Spiritual family. Not everyone wants that, and God being Good, as well as Love, will not force any of them to endure what they repeatedly reject in this life. Some people do want to actively participate in the family fellowship. To them God gives eternal life.

In that sense, eternal life does not mean never dying, it means really living as being fully alive in Christ forevermore.

To be fully alive in Christ now means to be a full and active participant in Christ. That's what Baptism is all about from our side of the equation. We physically, publicly commit to allowing Christ to be one with us by being baptized into Him, into Christ. We allow Him to clothe us with Him, with Christ, and so, as He is in us, and we are in Him as individual people, we all are therefore, one together in Christ, because we belong TO Christ.

Romans 12:5, "we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually parts of one another."

I Corinthians 12:20, "there are many parts, but one body." We are individually part of Christ physically through Baptism to match our being part of Christ spiritually. Christ includes all such Believers and so all who are one in Him are likewise one with each other.

Ephesians 4:25, "we are parts of one another." Being Baptized means that you accept your role as an integral and dynamic member of that Body, of the universal church, as exercised within the local church. Baptism then is a ritualized rite of passage whereby a local church accepts a professing Christian as a fellow member.

When a Christian commits to such a membership and the church acknowledges the Truth of that commitment a spiritual reality is enacted physically.

Clearly, such a Baptism confirms Salvation, but is in no way Salvific itself. The Christadelphians producing this slide are a cult and are absolutely wrong about a great many things including Baptism. Biblical Christian Baptism comes as the result of a person accepting Christ and then a local church, on behalf of the universal church, recognizing that fact and accepting the Christian into the fold.

That would imply a credobaptism, meaning a water Baptism of those people able to accept Christ for themselves and able to convince the local church of their Christian status. by acknowledgement of the Creed. That was easy. Let's add Christian kids to the conversation by asking...What about children born into the church though?

The early church wrestled with that problem and their solution was an additional type of Baptism. A dependent Baptism. Probably from the very start but without question clearly documented from about 100

years after Jesus Ascended, the church Baptized babies.

They retained credobaptism for new Believers, but they added paedobaptism, meaning child-Baptism for those below the age of consent to welcome them as members of the church... On their parents' account, or coattails, not under their own steam. That's important.

The Shepherd of Hermas dated to somewhere between 90 and 140 A.D. assumes infant Baptism. Irenaeus, the student of Polycarp, who was himself the student of the Apostle John, wrote about the, by then, well-established, practice in 180 A.D. After that there is a flood of Early Church Fathers, from Cyprian and Hippolytus to Chrysostom and Augustine confirming infant Baptism as the normal practice in the church.

Even more definitive is the fact that not a single Early Church Father wrote anything opposing the practice. While there is nothing in the Bible explicitly commanding baby Baptism, neither is there anything in the Bible explicitly prohibiting the practice either. The closest thing to a negative about it comes from Gregory in about 380 A.D., where he gave the advice to "put off the baptism of children, where there is no danger of

death, until their third year.” Well, if you’re counting, that’s not even close to the age of consent in any situation.

The idea back then was based upon three main Biblical concepts. 1) First, circumcision which was a sign of entrance into the Old Covenant was performed on adults converting, but also on babies who were born into the family. 2) Second, Jesus rebuked His disciples for hindering the small children from coming to Him. 3) Third, the Bible records “whole households” being Baptized and it is presumed that there would be children present.

Now, whatever you think about all of that, the point is the early church believed that infants born into the church family should be Baptized as members of the family. Everyone agreed that the Baptism was not Salvific in itself and that the parents along with the church would teach the child and that the child would one day need to accept Christ for themselves.

Then, over time, the theology and doctrines concerning infant Baptism changed into the non-Biblical practices that we see in many churches today. It all started when they determined that Baptism was Salvific.

It was in keeping with that ancient tradition that I Baptized Brady. I said clearly that we were not tying God's hands with our actions, but rather that we were taking a step of faith that God had placed Brady in our midst intentionally. That he would one day choose Jesus for himself with our prayers and with our support. I said that we are fallible, and that Brady could eventually prove us wrong.

We trusted in the Lord by welcoming Brady into our local family, on behalf of the Greater Body, as a member on his mom's account until he could become a full-fledged member on his own account.

The way I Baptized Brady was the way Irenaeus would Baptize a baby almost 1,900 years ago and it was the same way that I have Dedicated dozens of babies over the years with the single exception of using water instead of oil.

The reason that I intentionally chose to Baptize Brady was to clearly demonstrate that Baptism is not Salvific and that if a Baby Dedication must be done with oil to be effective, it is legalism pure and simple.

When we think that a thing must be done in a particular way in order for God to accept it, we are putting more stock in our precise performance of a ritual than we are in God's recognition and acceptance of our best intentions.

Now let me ask you, if Baptism does not Save a person, as the Bible makes clear then why would we object to Baptizing a baby in the way that I did it?

Here's an objection... Since a Baptized baby could later reject Christ, it is a bad practice to Baptize them in the first place. Perhaps, but how is that any different than a Baby Dedication? If you say that a Dedication isn't a Baptism, don't you have a legalistic view of Baptism?

Here's what's truly wrong. We have millions of people Baptized into the church who then rarely if ever darken the door of the church again. Such folks may be Christians, but they have denounced their own Baptism. They have spit on the physical Body of Christ. If you want to get worked-up over something, how about getting worked-up over that?



We could talk for a month of Sundays about this so let me finish for now with one final note. A Christian scholar wrote, "It is a tragedy that Christians should think of baptism as the water that divides. The sign of our union with Christ should unite Christians, not tear them apart." Baptism means that you are a member of the church. Baptism for those below the age of consent means that they are members of the church under the stewardship of their parents until the age of consent... At least the way the early church and Scott did it.

Baptized into the Body of Christ means to be clothed with Christ, which means fiercely desiring to be like Christ and to live for Him, not really as His physical representative on earth, but as an active part of His physical presence on earth working in harmonious concert with other Christians. Do you see the distinction there? You are not Christ, but together, we are.

As one who is part of the one IN Christ, no one has a senior claim to yours, no one has a greater status and position than you do. It makes no difference who you are, what you are, who you know, what you've done, who you'll become, or what you'll achieve. You are an eternally equal Child of the Living God in Christ.

Paul compares people based on three criteria, but he means all possible criteria. How do I know that? The Jews then, as now, recite a daily prayer that contains the Birkhot HaShachar (bir-xōt Hä-shä-xär). It is a giving of thanks to God for several things including that I was born a Jew and not a Gentile, that I was born free and not a slave, that I was born a man and not a woman.

Paul, who likely recited it thousands of times, turned that devotion upside down and in so doing, he not only repudiated the Jewish mentality of hierarchical inequality, he used their list to establish that all Christians are completely equal sharers in the Grace of God.

He confirmed that in the final verse. The Judaizers had told the Galatians that in order to be children of Abraham, and therefore children of the Promise, they had to get circumcised and obey the Law. Paul declared that, on the contrary, everyone who belongs to Christ through faith is already a descendant of Abraham and therefore heirs of God's eternal promise. There can therefore be no distinction between such believers.

This has everything to do with our standing as God's children and nothing to do with other distinctions. There are future prophecies, still unfulfilled, dealing directly with Jews and not Gentiles. In this world, there has always been, and very unfortunately, there will always be slavery. In our physical individual physical bodies there are many obvious, and many not so obvious, differences including whether we are male or female.

If all gender distinctions are erased and there is truly no difference between men and women then the first thing that happens is women are ordained as Deacons, Elders, and Pastors. Do you know what follows logically and inevitably from that? Homosexuality is normalized. If there is no difference between a man and a woman, then any two people can be, let's say, married... Regardless of their physical attributes.

God tells us in I Corinthians 7:24 that "each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called." It means that we are equal in our status and value even though none of us are equal in our particular circumstances.

This brings me to attitude. A proper Christian attitude is vital to life in Christ, both spiritually and physically in the church. The proper attitude always starts with 1) a recognition that God is God. God made you the way He did, and He put you where He put you and you either accept you for who you are, and for where you're at, or you repudiate God by refusing to accept your lot and your role.

God has a role for you to play in this life. Accept it and your attitude will dramatically improve. The 2) second step in a proper attitude is the recognition that you have been given eternity, and you didn't deserve it at all. If that very notion doesn't fill you to overflow with humble gratitude, you don't get it.

The 3) third step in the process is then being able to understand, accept, embrace, and operate, in the super-overabundant Love of God. When that happens God can Love others through you. That's the attitude you're striving for.

What does that attitude look like? A right attitude is nicely summed up in Philippians 2:2–6, where the church is admonished, encouraged, and exhorted that... 2being of the same mind (with each other),

maintaining the same love (for one another), united in (Holy) spirit, intent on one purpose (His divine purpose, we...) 3Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit (or envy of others and ambition for yourself), but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves; 4do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.

A few verses later in Philippians 3:8&9–13-15, it continues with Paul saying, 8I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, 9and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith...

13Brothers and sisters, I do not regard myself as having taken hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15Therefore, all who are mature, let's have this attitude.

Let's have this attitude... Stop worrying about everything and focus on Christ. Focus on being genuinely humble and truly grateful that you are a Child of God. What else could possibly matter? It's when we focus on the distractions all around us, in the church and outside of it, that we fail to be mature.

I have said it a million times, if you look for what is wrong you will find it. Negativity is easy, it's exponentially self-producing, it is destructive, and it is of Satanic origins. Anyone can be a critic. It takes no character or skill or talent or intelligence. What takes enormous character, skill and effort is to actually build something, to improve something, to be positive when all around you is negative.

Closely related to attitude is one's mindset. Romans 8:5&6 makes it clear that, 5Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

The person who has their mind set on the things of this world cannot please God. You choose your attitude and

mindset... You choose, and because you choose, God will hold you responsible for your choice of attitude. The evil disunity that a bad attitude and mindset produces for you and for those around you is devastating in the here and now, how much worse when you face Jesus?

Over more than two decades I have watched hundreds of people get grumpy about one thing or another and then with their negative attitude begin seeing more that's wrong. They begin searching for what's wrong, and boy howdy, do they find it. Most of them eventually leave what has become an intolerable church. They hop over to another church and find everything there simply wonderful. Why didn't they know about this magnificent church before? It is just fantastic, right up until it isn't. I have seen some people pull out of their negative nose dive and reengage. That's maturity.

Perhaps, if we took ourselves a little less seriously, and God a bit more seriously, we'd actually strive to obey His command to Love one another in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we would put the interests of the whole church ahead of our own.

Communion for them was a fellowship meal taken together in the unity of the Holy Spirit. As represented in the Cross, the horizontal relationship among Christians embodied at the table fellowship was due to each person's vertical relationship with the Heavenly Father through Christ Jesus.

Because of our connection with each other in Christ, and our loving one another in obedience to His command, we eat in His honor symbolizing the unity bought by His Sacrifice. All of this is done in grateful acknowledgement of the resultant Grace given by the Father through Christ as the Holy Spirit reveals the Truth to us.

The type of ritualized, elemental, and symbolic, Communion we practice and is practiced by nearly every other Christian group came about as a result of two developments. 1) First, it was an effort to minimize the abuses encountered with a full-blown meal like those addressed by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 11:17-33.

2) Second, it was just a practical matter of not having the space, the time, and or the resources to feed everyone as the number of people in the church grew.



Communion was always a central feature in all Christian gatherings until the radical reformation of ultra-protestant Christians, like the Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, and the Swiss Brethren began changing it about 450 years ago.

These folks were products of the new modern era, often called modernity, where humanism fully took root. It was a rejection of the authority of government, of the church, of the educational system, and of other institutions. It was where Protagoras' "Man is the measure of all things," was finally realized.

Most particularly it was the new belief that all men were equal. In Christian circles, people began placing a much heavier emphasis on the "priesthood of all believers," stressing the autonomy of the individual person to act as their own Pope, Bishop, Priest, and Pastor. People didn't need to rely on anyone else they could read and interpret the Bible for themselves.

They rejected all that was ritualistic and hierarchical. The new Christian groups that were spawned, like the Puritans, Congregationalists, Anabaptists, Quakers, Brethren, and other Baptists all tossed out the

elements that they associated with the clergy/laity distinction.

Communion was a highly ritualized weekly practice that was tossed. Most of these new denominations opted for a purely symbolic celebration of Communion where people would often serve themselves on a once a month, once a quarter, or once a year basis. Some even eliminated it altogether. It wasn't reduced or stopped because they wanted it to be special and not rote, but because it reminded them of Catholicism.

Of those responding on the survey about half said that they liked having Communion every Sunday and about half said that we should have Communion once a month or so. We have had seasons where it was every Sunday and where it was much less often. Right now, we are in a season where it is almost every Sunday.

The point and purpose of a church service is to remember Christ. Nothing does that better than remembering Him through Communion.

The Pastor serves the Elders and the Elders serve you. That isn't because we are higher than you. It is because we fill a different role than you – a role of

serving you. It is an acknowledgement that Communion is a church function of unifying all of us equals together while recognizing the interdependence of our assigned tasks in the Body.



2025 Annual Church Meeting:

Everyone who responded to the survey and mentioned fellowship enjoyed what was offered and generally wanted more opportunities. 11 people specifically thanked us for the monthly potlucks and no one said anything negative about them – thanks to Amy for getting that going again.

Our new church service format was specifically praised by 4 people and criticized by one. Our plan for now... And I say for now, because this is and always has been an anti-legalistic church. We don't set anything in stone other than what God has already set in stone. Just because we are doing something a particular way now, it does not mean that we will never change.

For now, we are going to have a potluck after the first service of every month. I plan to skip our in-service Communion on most, but not necessarily all, of those Sundays. We have Sunday school at 9:30, we have a service with the whole church at 10:30. After about 20 minutes of singing, we have the Offering, then King's Kids with me, then the kids are dismissed, then the sermon, then the kids return, and we finish with Communion most weeks.

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On the first Monday of the month, we have a ladies' night where some men gather as well. Since we generally have our monthly potluck on the Sunday before, there was a suggestion to change the night. What do you think about that?

We also have Wednesday evening classes; Dinners for 6-8. Annually, we have VBS and Church Camp. VBS this year was amazing, not because we had record numbers of kids, but because we had record numbers of volunteers. Thank you! If we can get that sort of response again, I predict we'll have the kids to match.

Camp is an ever-evolving thing. We are always looking for ways to make it better. Sometimes fixing one thing

causes a problem for someone. If you want camp to be different, join Stacey in planning it.

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Overall, you can easily categorize the surveys as 17 that were entirely positive, 4 that had a bit of both positive and negative, and 3 that were completely negative. My personality being what it is focused on the last 3. 16 of the respondents specifically mentioned the sermons positively and 3 specifically mentioned them as negative. Again, no mystery which surveys I took to heart.

Even so, I have an excellent attitude lately. I am excited about the future of Alêtheia. We are actively trying to transition the church into the next generation. When I say that, I'm talking about the focus and the leadership. It isn't to diminish the older folks any more than we diminish the kids. All of our generations are important. In fact, it is said that you can judge the health of a church by its representation of all ages. That's a family – a multi-generational fellowship.

We've made this move to be more of a family by including the kids in our service. Some don't like it, others do. It's called parenting in the pew. It means

teaching our kids how to honor God through a church service.

To help the next generation take over the heavy lifting we have appointed new Deacons and new Elders, and we have formed a new worship team led by Luke and Anna.

My plan for Alêtheia's pastor is to continue listening to the Lord and see where He takes me and the church. I have no idea what's going to happen and that may be why I'm so interested in seeing how things unfold. I'm as equally ready to retire today as I am to serve another 10 years. Whatever the Lord wants.

With that said, I am actively searching for my own replacement. I think it would be great to get a guy and work together with him for a couple of years and slowly hand the responsibilities over to him, but we'll see.

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On the music front we currently have five team leaders. Janene on the 1st Sunday. Luke and Anna on the 2nd and 4th. Don and Suzie on the 3rd. Shelton on the 5th.

I wanted to get a younger team going and then incorporate them into the mix once they were well-established. Some of our veteran musicians can have strong personalities, preferences and opinions, and so, to avoid a repeat of a past situation, I want the newer members to get comfortable before integrating the teams.

My intention is to mix and match younger and older singers and musicians in the near future, once the younger ones have more confidence. For now, we have what we have. As always, each team leader is in charge of their team and will determine the best fit for their team.

When Derek stepped down, I asked for patience and understanding and support. Whatever you think I received in that regard, I'm asking for more going forward.

Of the respondents who mentioned music, 11 were very positive and supportive, while 4 were negative. 1 person wanted more hymns, 1 person wanted less hymns and more contemporary songs, and 1 person wanted more music in general.

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Part of our move to the next generation includes a greater focus on the children being part of the church. We are always looking for better ways to engage them. Our biggest problem is having enough volunteers to support them. Many people have many ideas, but without teachers we have what we have.

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Other things mentioned in the surveys... Having more game nights and having better outreach and support for new members.

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One person wanted me to preach from the Old Testament. I often bring the Old Testament into my sermons, and we talk about it in Sunday school. We have classes on Wednesday night covering Old Testament Books. The kids have that curriculum as well.

I don't preach from the Old Testament very often because it does not work with expository verse-by-verse preaching. The vast majority of Alêtheians have repeatedly shown that they want that kind of preaching. No one else in the valley, that I know of, does it. There



are a few expository preachers, but they don't go verse-by-verse through entire Bible Books like we do – they skip the drier bits.

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One person wrote: “What decade will you finally add restrooms? You've promised multiple times; you get every other addition and remodel done, planned or not.”

We had the lowest giving year since 2018. That's a 6 year low by a substantial bit. It was almost \$30,000 less than our conservative budget estimate and even though we tightened our belt through the entire year spending almost \$30,000 less than budgeted, we still ended the year with a deficit. We finished 2024, in the red, or with a negative balance for the very first time in Alêtheia Christian Fellowship history.

At the end of November, we were nearly \$15,000 in the hole. Now, praise God for His faithfulness, because of outstanding giving around Christmas we only ended the year \$2,847 in the red. While that returned a nice buffer in our savings account, there certainly was no money to build bathrooms last year.

Why then did other projects get funded? It was because people designated their giving specifically for those projects. Our hands are tied when money and material are designated by the giver. If you want more bathrooms, give us the money for them, and we'll build you more bathrooms.

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5-year trend:

2025 Giving Estimate...	\$230,448
2024 Giving...	\$220,018
2023 Giving...	\$248,382
2022 Giving...	\$264,153
2021 Giving...	\$271,208

2024 in review:

2023 Actual Giving...	\$248,382
2024 Giving Estimate...	\$249,410
2024 Actual Giving...	\$220,018
2024 Budget Shortfall...	\$29,392
2024 Actual Spending...	\$223,054
2024 Actual Shortfall...	\$2,847
2025 Giving Estimate...	\$230,448
2025 Spending Estimate...	\$230,448